

Chittenden County Regional Emergency Planning Committee
January 19, 2022
Meeting Notes

Christine Forde called the meeting to order and asked participants to introduce themselves saying what municipality they represent and their role in Emergency Management.

Attendees:

Christine Forde, CCRPC. Administrative support to this committee

Regina Mahony, Planning Program Manager, CCRPC. Emergency Management falls under the planning program at CCRPC.

Dan Albrecht, CCRPC. Works on tasks including water quality, hazard mitigation planning and annual monitoring, and local liaison reporting to Vermont Emergency Management.

Pam Brangan (not present), CCRPC. Also works with the Emergency Management team and provides mapping resources to the municipalities.

Charlie Cole, Essex Town Fire Chief

Amy Grover, Bolton Town Clerk and Treasurer and Member of the National Ski Patrol.

Dave Allerton, Milton Director of Public Works

Derek Libby, Burlington Deputy Fire Chief

Tate Jeffery – Huntington Fire Chief

Helen Stirling, Westford Interim Emergency Management Director

Kyle Kapitanski, Richmond Police Chief

Michaela Foody, Milton Director of Public Safety Milton and Emergency Management Director

Ron Hoague, Essex Chief of Police

Bob Lake, Shelburne Police

Bob Stone, Underhill Emergency Management Director

Lee Krohn, Shelburne Town Manager

Background:

Christine provided background on the Regional Emergency Management Committees, which were created by the Legislature and Vermont Emergency Management to fulfill the role of regional all-hazard preparedness. Following consolidation of the Local Emergency Management Committees (LEPCs) to one statewide LEPC there is no regional organization for emergency management coordination.

REMCs are located throughout the state and generally follow either County or Regional Planning Commission boundaries.

The Legislature specified in statute the membership of this committee. Each municipality has two voting members. The Emergency Management Director is an automatic member unless a designee is identified. The second member is a representative of the local emergency services community and is appointed by the municipality's Executive or Legislative branch. CCRPC is asking that the voting members be confirmed each year with submittal of the Local Emergency Management Plan (LEMP) by May 1.

There are also nonvoting members that represent the regional emergency management community. Christine reviewed the groups listed in the statute -- fire departments, emergency medical services, law enforcement, media, transportation, Regional Planning Commissions, hospitals, The Department of Health's District Office, The Division of Emergency Management, organizations serving vulnerable populations, any other interested public or private individual or organization.

CCRPC is compiling a list of people to be invited to participate as nonvoting members. We are discussing whether to appoint specific people to be part of the committee or invite groups to participate freely and not specifically list the person to participate. Christine asked the attendees if any groups are missing from this list and should be added. The attendees did not identify any other groups that should be added.

Christine then discussed proxies. Each municipality has two representatives. They can designate one person to represent both members and thus have two votes instead of one. Proxy designation needs to be done in writing before the meeting.

The issue of proxies is important in voting because quorum is defined as a majority of all voting members. Christine reviewed what the committee would be voting on – financial matters, electing officers, and electing representatives for statewide members.

Regina noted that it would be our preference to have one member per community rather than two and the proxy options gives the opportunity to meet the quorum requirement by having one member present.

Christine reviewed requirements of the REMC as detailed in the legislation:

- Develop a regional plan consisting of regional contact information, regional resources, and regional mutual aid agreements. Most of this information is contained in the Local Emergency Management Plans.
- Coordinate and support regional all-hazards emergency management activities including planning, training, and exercising.
- One individual, elected from membership, shall represent the REMC on the statewide LEPC.
- One individual, elected from membership, shall represent the REMC in the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA)/Stakeholder Preparedness Review (SPR). This individual will report on the capabilities and gaps in the region's response to threats and hazards.

- One individual, elected from membership, shall represent the group at the Integrated Preparedness Plan Workshop (IPPW). This individual will report on the plans, trainings, and exercises needed for the region.

Christine noted that the State emergency Response Commission (SERC) and statewide LEPC will coordinate on HAZMAT issues and Vermont Emergency Management will provide support through technical assistance and funding to RPCs for administrative support. REMCs may have access to competitive grant funding and CCRPC will explore those options.

REMCs are required to meet at least quarterly and CCRPC proposes that the Chittenden County REMC follow that schedule. Christine proposed April 20, at 9 am for our next meeting. We will continue to evaluate if other dates or times works better for members.

Christine then reviewed some possible future topics and asked for input from the committee. She noted that in a survey that was sent out to all REMC members the number one topic of interest to responders was communicating with residents via (social) media.

Discussion:

Kyle Kapitanski noted that the Chittenden County Law Enforcement Executives are meeting tomorrow, and he would inform them about this group.

Christine said that we want to make this group useful and not redundant.

Ron Hoague suggested that we could use this group to review responses to past events and look at lessons learned. Also, coordination of ARPA spending between towns. For example, there may be opportunities to coordinate upgrading communications equipment.

Dan noted that the committee could provide information and assistance on grant availability since there are many funding opportunities.

Updates from Attendees:

Underhill – Bob Stone – Underhill is always concerned about snowpack and melting with regard to spring flooding.

Westford – Helen Sterling – Interim EMC while Westford's permanent EMD is deployed. Previously worked as director for incident management at the national level for customs and border protection. Has experience with developing and managing tabletop exercises. New to the area and interested in learning who the contact people are. Also interested in after action reviews to learn what worked and what didn't work for past events.

Milton -- Michaela Foody – Interested in bringing different groups together. Brought in Dave Allerton, Milton Director of Public Works. Town engineers design culverts and look at waterways around town. Bringing them into the conversation is good. Dave agreed and said the engineers evaluate the problems of the past and try to make sure they don't happen again.

Essex – Charles Cole – Working on upgrades to radio infrastructure. Fire services – we are all scrambling for resources. See this group as a resource to come up with ideas about coordinating staffing. Also, it is important for municipalities to begin planning for upgrades to buildings and this committee could assist with finding funding opportunities and grant sources.

Bolton – Amy Grover – Bolton very small rural town with limited resources. The EMD is the selectboard chair and is not running again. Bolton has an all-volunteer fire department. Resources are always an issue. But the town also has lots of potential emergency issues – rain events, snow events, potential for ice jams in the Winooski River, potential for rail events. Bolton has had many FEMA declared events and has taken the opportunity to upgrade infrastructure. Applied for a BRIC grant last week. Access to resources and grant funding is an issue that the committee could help with.

Huntington – Tate Jeffery -- Biggest issue is flooding. If they could improve communication with residents that would be helpful.

Richmond – Kyle Kapitanski – Flooding issues similar to Huntington are a concern.

Burlington -- Derek Libby – Same challenges as others. Radio infrastructure is nearing it's end of life. The City is trying to address that. Dealing with the impact of COVID and employees being out of work because of COVID has been challenging. Another challenge is developing a good sheltering plan for the City.

Shelburne – Lee Krohn – Note that VT Alert is a great resource for communities. He worries about large scale incidents. We do well with smaller incidents, but large incidents, such as a rail incident, are challenging, especially if something happened in Shelburne Village. Lee also mentioned possibly setting up a public works mutual aid modeled after fire mutual aid.

Christine noted that she would send the spring flood flyer, meeting notes, and Chittenden County REMC weblink.

Meeting adjourned